

NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

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Minnesota among Best with Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

St. Paul, MN, July 28, 2010-Minnesota State Conservationist Don Baloun of St. Paul today announced the results from the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) 2010 first sign up for Minnesota.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) June 30, 2010 final report reveals Minnesota sits second place in the nation for the total number of CSP contracts achieving a total of 906 CSP contracts.

Administered by NRCS, the CSP will be adding almost \$10 million to MN's economy from this first signup. "CSP is an opportunity tailor-made for conservation-minded farmers on working farms, and forest lands to continue to achieve even high levels of conservation stewardship," says Baloun. Through CSP, contract holders get technical assistance and funding assistance for installing new conservation practices and adopting additional activities, and improving, maintaining, and managing existing activities.

Nationally, 10,630 contracts were obligated enrolling over 12.6 million total acres. "What this report means ..right now in Minnesota, there are 906 contracts with farmers who are outstanding conservationists," says Baloun. "We're proud to be working with producers who are good stewards of Minnesota's natural resources-soil, water, air, plants and animals.

Authorized in the 2008 Farm Bill, CSP offers payments to producers who maintain a high level of conservation on their land and who agree to adopt higher levels of stewardship. Eligible lands include cropland, pastureland, rangeland and non-industrial forestland. Individuals, entities, and Indian Tribes operating agricultural or private non-industrial private forestland may be eligible for the program.

Farmers are advised to start preparing for the next funding opportunity with signup number two which could happen in the fall, 2010. CSP is a continuous sign-up program so producers may contact their local NRCS office for an application at anytime. "The CSP self-screening checklist is available to determine if the new program is right for you and your business," says Baloun.

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To find out more about CSP please visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/csp/html

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